



SAINT PETER

CATHOLIC PARISH ✚ SCHOOL

7121 County Rd. K
Middleton, WI 53562
(608) 831-4843
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ashtoncatholic.org

Dear Groom and Bride,

Congratulations on your engagement! St. Peter Parish and the whole Church earnestly desire to help all engaged couples to be prepared for a lifetime of love and joy together. In order to assist couples in preparing for the lifelong commitment of marriage, we don't just want to prepare you for your wedding day, but for a marriage that will withstand the challenges of everyday life in this broken world. Below are some points of reflection for your preparation. There is also an attachment with the steps for marriage preparation and the policies for weddings celebrated at St. Peter Parish Church.

Love and Sacrifice

When a couple starts dating and gets engaged, many people will say that they're "in love" or that they have "fallen in love." The reality is that love is more of a choice than something that someone 'falls' into like an accident. When a couple decides to get married, they are preparing for a lifetime of love, of choosing the best for their beloved over their own desires and comforts. They promise to make many sacrifices of love for each other. These sacrifices of love are meant to help each other in this life and to aid each other in reaching your eternal destination of heaven. As you enter the marriage preparation process, look at it as an opportunity to grow in your knowledge of each other, but also an invitation to begin making the first of many sacrifices of love for each other and for the good of your future as husband and wife.

Prayer

Now is the perfect time to start praying daily with your future spouse; wedding-planning stress gives ample opportunity to share your concerns with the Lord! A great way to incorporate prayer into wedding planning is by reading through the biblical readings and prayers that are used at the wedding. Reading them prayerfully, slowly, and letting the words sink into your hearts, allows you to make the Lord the foundation and focus of your wedding marriage. And remember to pray – together or separately – on your wedding morning!

Remember...the wedding is only the beginning!

Pope Francis encourages everyone in the Church to help couples live out married life. "They [young people] need to be encouraged to see the sacrament not as a single moment that then becomes a part of the past and its memories, but rather as a reality that permanently influences the whole of married life" (AL, no. 215). The Sunday after the wedding (and every Sunday!), be sure to come back to church for Mass and other parish events and meet your community at St. Peter's... this time as husband and wife. And remember that the vows you say at your wedding day are all in the future tense ("I will"); they "involve a totality that includes the future: 'until death do us part'" (AL, no. 214).

If you have any questions about the items discussed in this letter, please contact the parish office. Be assured of my prayers for you and may God bless you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev (M) Gernetzke" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. Christopher Gernetzke
Pastor
St. Peter Catholic Church

Encl: St. Peter Catholic Parish Wedding Ceremony Policies & Recommendations

Wedding Ceremony Policies & Recommendations



SAINT PETER
CATHOLIC PARISH + SCHOOL

Reserving a Date

We understand that your wedding date is one of the most important decisions that you initially make after your engagement. While no wedding date can be promised until the Pre-Nuptial Investigation is complete, we are able to hold a date on our calendar for your wedding ceremony in most circumstances. In order to hold a date, we require the security deposit and wedding fee to be paid. Details on the fees are outlined below.

Parish Membership

At least one of the parties (bride or groom) must be a registered, contributing parishioner or adult child of a parishioner for at least one year prior to beginning the marriage preparation process. Those who are not parishioners or adult children of parishioners are considered 'non-parishioners' and can celebrate their wedding at St. Peter but must complete the marriage preparation process at the parish where they live.

Non-parishioner couples should contact both St. Peter to reserve a date and pay the fees outlined below, and also contact the pastor of the parish where one of the parties lives to begin the marriage preparation process. Non-parishioner couples will speak with our wedding coordinator to arrange the immediate details as soon as they reserve a date and schedule a meeting with the St. Peter Pastor regarding the wedding ceremony at least one month prior to their wedding. All other steps in the marriage preparation process will be facilitated by their home parish (mentioned above).

Fees

We charge \$500 for parishioner, and \$1000 for non-parishioner weddings. This fee covers the use of the church, the organist/accompanist, wedding coordinator, a server, and the priest's stipend. There is also an additional \$200 security deposit for the use of the church, which will be refunded after the wedding, provided the church is returned to a clean and orderly state, and that the couple abides by the verbal and written parish policies (outlined in this document) while completing the marriage preparation and during the wedding rehearsal and ceremony.

Marriage Preparation Process

We have outlined below the Marriage Preparation Process for St. Peter Parish, in accordance with local diocesan policies and the universal norms of the Church.

Step 1: Meet with Your Pastor

Contact the parish as soon as possible - *at least 6 months* before your preferred wedding date, preferably one year before your preferred wedding date. You will need to

discuss the marriage preparation process, determine canonical and civil eligibility for marriage, and explore the possibility for the sacrament of Confirmation, if necessary. You will also be able to discuss any questions or concerns you have, e.g. about a prior marriage, differences of faith (Catholic and non-Catholic), or if one of you may be from a different diocese. Please remember that it is essential to have this meeting as early as possible to resolve any issues, obtain necessary documents, and attend the marriage preparation programs offered.

Step 2: FOCCUS Marriage Inventory

You may be required to complete the FOCCUS marriage preparation inventory. FOCCUS is a series of statements designed to assess each of your habits, expectations, and values; it will provide you with a personalized profile of your relationship's strengths and weaknesses. The inventory is an important starting place for couple discussion and a map of the area(s) that may need affirmation, attention, or problem solving.

Step 3: Marriage Formation

Witness to Love Program - This is an opportunity for one-on-one conversations with a married couple that you choose to mentor you! They will give you a real life witness of the joys and challenges of married life in the modern world. The Witness to Love Program also includes a set of videos to guide you and your mentor couple in conversation, as well as time with your pastor, and a parish-sponsored marriage preparation retreat. The program is designed to allow you to encounter Christ, grow in virtue, and have meaningful conversations which will help you build a solid foundation from which your marriage can flourish!

Step 4: Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Church invites all Catholics to prepare themselves spiritually prior to their marriage through the sacrament of Reconciliation. We will discuss how this can be facilitated at our initial meeting.

Step 5: Meet with Pastor to Discuss the Couple's Rehearsal, Wedding Rehearsal, and Wedding Ceremony

After you've completed marriage formation as outlined above, you should have an additional meeting with the priest who will witness your marriage. At this meeting you will have the opportunity to discuss the formation you have received, finalize liturgical plans, and address any additional needs that you may have.

Ceremony Details

The Rite of Marriage

The Catholic Church throughout the world uses the Order of Celebrating Matrimony as the guide and standard for how weddings are celebrated by Catholics. The prayers, readings, vows, and rites are all specified in this rite, because couples enter marriage as established by God and given to the Church to safeguard and share. This means that there are limits to what is appropriate and fitting in the celebration of Catholic weddings. While other church communities may permit things that we do not, know that there is good reason behind this, and we are happy to answer the questions you have. Below are outlined the basic policies we have regarding the ceremony and use of the church.

Place and Time of Celebration

Weddings are celebrated in St. Peter Parish church. Our church seats up to 400 people. We generally schedule Saturday weddings with a start time no later than 1pm as we have regular parish services later that afternoon. Weddings can take place other days at the discretion of the pastor and subject to scheduled parish events. The couple can also request the use of the gathering area and school hall for wedding party preparations for the day of the ceremony. To hold a date on the calendar, the couple would submit the \$200 security deposit and wedding fee. While no wedding date can be promised until the Pre-Nuptial Investigation is complete, we are able to hold a date on our calendar for your wedding ceremony in most circumstances.

Wedding Coordinator

As part of the wedding fees we include the service of a wedding coordinator. The wedding coordinator works with couples and their wedding party to make sure that all the events happening at St. Peter go smoothly so you can be present to the wedding ceremony and vows you are making. If you would like to contact the wedding coordinator, please email her at weddings@ashtoncatholic.org or call the parish office at (608) 831-4843.

Music

Music during a Catholic wedding should add beauty and dignity to the ceremony, and also plays an important liturgical role. The parish music director will work with you to choose music for your wedding liturgy. Their service and an accompanist/organist are included in your wedding fees. If you would like a cantor or other musicians, our music director can help connect you with skilled musicians to fill these roles. There are many beautiful songs that reflect God's love, comprised of both instrumental and classical selections. Secular or pop music is best saved for the reception. Music selection is subject to the approval of the music

director and/or pastor and recorded music is not permitted, and no outside musicians can be used during the wedding.

Readings, Readers, and Intercessions

Generally, the couple can choose the first reading, responsorial psalm, second reading, and Gospel from the options outlined in the *Rite of Celebrating Matrimony*, except on certain days of the liturgical year. The couple also generally chooses who can read these readings (except the Gospel) and who will offer the Prayers of the Faithful (Intercessions). Because these moments of hearing Scripture and praying together are an important part of a faith-filled Catholic wedding, it is best to choose Catholic readers who have read at Mass. Give them a copy of the reading and/or prayers well in advance and have them to attend the wedding rehearsal so they can practice in the church. Make sure they understand the solemnity of the occasion. There are standard petitions for the Prayers of the Faithful, some of which may be adapted to the couple and their families. The St. Peter Pastor will discuss this with you when you plan your ceremony with him.

Decorations

In "the Joy of Love" (*Amoris Laetitia*), Pope Francis notes that sometimes all the practical considerations about the wedding—the things that wedding magazines focus on, like color schemes, makeup design, or clothing— "tend to drain not only the budget but energy and joy as well" (no. 212). Pope Francis does not want you to be "exhausted and harried" on your wedding day instead of "focused and ready for the great step that [you] are about to take" (AL, no. 212). At St. Peter's, it is our policy that two weeks prior to the wedding, the couple would request permission and give a general plan for decorations that will adorn the church, especially in the sanctuary which is set apart for the worship of God. If there are certain sentimental objects or rituals that are meaningful to the couple, but not appropriate within the celebration of the sacred liturgies, they should be reserved for the reception or outside of the wedding ceremony in another form. During some liturgical seasons there are decorations in the church that may not be removed or altered. Please consult the wedding coordinator before making any plans for decorations.

Attire

A couple's wedding day is a sacred event where the couple comes before God to ask Him to bless their marriage. In order to preserve this focus and atmosphere of prayer, we take care to conduct ourselves modestly and with dignity inside the church, before, during, and after the ceremony. Part of this conduct includes dressing appropriately while in church, including dresses that cover to within a couple inches of the top of the knee and cover the shoulders, and no shorts or short sleeve shirts. If wedding dresses or bridesmaids' dresses that are sleeveless have already been selected, you can use your own shawl, or St. Peter's can provide shawls for you and your party. The shawls are not necessary in other areas/ buildings of St.

Peter's property such as the school or Connector (gathering space). If you have any questions regarding your wedding attire, please speak with the wedding coordinator.

Wedding Party

There is no official role for bridesmaids and groomsmen in the Catholic wedding liturgy, but many couples choose to have friends/family stand in support of them as part of a wedding party during the ceremony. If you are having individuals stand up as part of a wedding party, please make sure that they also understand the solemnity of the occasion. If the individual is not Catholic, please give them notice of the practice of remaining seated or coming forward with their arms crossed to receive a blessing at Holy Communion.

In order to have a valid and licit marriage, and to keep the solemnity and dignity of the occasion, we explicitly forbid any of the wedding party, including the bride and groom, from consuming alcohol or other illegal substances on the day of the wedding, before the ceremony, whether on or off the premises. If any of the wedding party, especially the bride or groom, shows sign of being under the influence, we reserve the right to not celebrate the wedding, or bar the affected parties from participating.

I have read and agree to the terms and conditions contained in this document. Detach and mail a copy to St. Peter Catholic Church, 7121 County Rd. K., Middleton, WI 53562.

Groom's Signature

Bride's Signature

Groom's Name

Bride's Name